the Unstarred Question 2569 and 2348 given in Rajya Sabha on the 19.3.97 and on 13.8.97 respectively and state:

(a) whether waiting list of telephone connections for General Category Registrants in Rourkela, Orissa, has since been cleared as per repeated assertion by Government that it would be done latest by October, 1997;

(b) if not, the reasons for the presistent delay in installing the said telephone connections;

(c) whether Government have not taken any steps to expedite availability of the required equipments continuously cited as the reason for non-clearance of the waiting list;

(d) if so, the details thereof alongwith the action taken against the negligent officials so as to enforce better customer response and accountability in Rourkela; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) No, Sir. There are two exchanges one is E-108 at Plant Area and the waiting list is cleared upto September, 1997. The other is RLU at Town-Ship and the waiting list is cleared upto July 96. The new telephone connection against application No. A-2782 promised to be installed by the end of October, 97 has been provided with indicator RKL-541398 on 11.11.97.

(b) The expansion work of Township RLU exchange from 6000 lines to 7000 lines is under progress.

(c) No, Sir. Continuous efforts are being made for the expansion of 1000 lines RLU at Township. Installation of another RLU exchange at Koel Nagar, Township is also in progress.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) Since work is in progress as stated at (c), no action is warranted.

Permission to set-up video Conference Facilities by VSNL

3. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether permission of VSNL in necessary to set up Video conference facilities; if so, what is the license fee;

(b) the number of lincenses issued by VSNL for Video conference so far, State-wise; and

(c) the names and addresses of companies having Video conferencing facilities, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) (a) and (b) No Sir. For provision of Video Conferencing as a commercial service, licence from Department of Telecommunications is required. Only one Letter of Intent has been issued for this service so far. The lincense fee has not been finalised as yet.

(c) Does not arise, inview of (a) & (b) above.

Criteria for issuing O.B. to the subscribers

4. SHRI SURYABHAN PATIL VAHADANE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to refer to the answer to the Unstarred Question 2347 given in Rajya Sabha on the 13.8.97 and state:

(a) the criteria to handover O.B. to the subscribers;

(b) the number of O.B. released and handed over to the subscribers as on 1.7.97 under Janpath Telephone Exchange;

(c) whether it is a fact that OBs are not handed over to the subscribers as on due date;

(d) whether O.B. has been released and handed over to the subscriber of Regd. No. OA 13001522 dated 29.4.97;

(e) if so, the date of OB released and handed over to the subscriber;

(f) if not, the reasons therefor and the action taken against the official responsible; and

(g) by when the telephone connection would be installed against the aforesaid Regd. No.?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) Sir, there is no criteria as such to hand over OBs to the subscribers. However, intimation letters are sent to the subscribers by post.

(b) 380 OBs have been released from 1.4.97 to 30.6.97 in Janpath Division and sent to D.E. (Out Door) Janpath.

(c) Sir, OBs are not handed over to subscribers; only intimation letters are sent to the subscribers by post.

(d) OB No. 1668 dated 6.5.97 has been released in respect of Regd. No. QA/13001522 dated 29.4.97 in the name of Shri T.C. Sharma for provisioning of Telephone at 792, Baba Kharak Singh Marg, New Delhi.

(e) OB No. 1668 dt. 6.5.97 already sent to DE (Outdoor) Janpath on 8.5.97.

(f) Does not arise in view of (e) above.

(g) Telephone connection likely to be provided by the end of December 1997; presently the area being technically not feasible.

Post Offices, Telegraph Offices, Speed Post Offices and Telephone Exchanges in Maharashtra

5. SHRI SURYABHAN PATIL VAHADANE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Post Offices, Telegraph Offices, Speed Post Offices and Telephone Exchanges working in Tribal, Rural and Backward district, in Maharashtra, district-wise and region-wise;

(b) the areas, villages, cities getting such facilities and what is the ratio or earmark put by Government for such facilities in ADIVASI areas;

(c) whether there is any such demands put before Government for opening of such more Post Offices etc. in the rural, backward, urban and ADIVASI villages; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) The number of post offices and Speed Post Offices working in Tribal, Rural/backward districts in Maharashtra State district-wise and region-wise is given in Statement-I (*See* below). The details of telegraph offices in Tribal, Rural and backward districts of Maharashtra, district-wise and Region-wise is at Statement-II (*See* below). Information regarding Telephone Exchanges is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

The number of post offices and Speed Post Offices working in Tribal, Rural/ backward districts in Maharashtra State district-wise and region-wise is given in Statement-I (See below). The details of telegraph offices in Tribal, Rural and backward districts of Maharashtra, district-wise and Region-wise is at Statement-II (*See* below). Information regarding Telephone Exchanges is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

(b) Out of the total number of 40687 inhabited villages in Maharashtra, 11280 are having post offices. The area served per post office in rural areas is 27.38 Sq. Kms, while that in Urban area is 4.66 Sq.Km. The total area of 307713 Sq. Km. of Maharashtra is served by 12324 post offices. The details of places where Speed Post facility is available is given in statement-III (*See* below).

No ratio or earmark is put by Government for such facilities in Adivasi Areas. During the Annual Plan 1997-98, Maharashtra Postal Circle has been allotted a target for opening 9 post offices in Tribal areas and 29 post offices in other areas.

(c) and (d) There is a demand for opening more post offices in Maharashtra and the details are given in Statement-IV.